

BMHA Newsletter

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA



Volume 4, Number 4

Oct/Nov/Dec 1993

EDITOR'S COLUMN

New Membership List

The annual edition of the Membership List is included with this issue. As usual, the Membership List is sorted by state and zip. This arrangement comes in handy when you want to find out if there are any members living nearby, in case you need help in solving any bike/ham problems — or if you just want to get up a ride bunch. Also, you'll find the listing by state a big advantage when you're planning a cycling (or driving) trip across several states — gives you a chance ahead of time to tap members for local information, and even set up some "eyeball" meetings to keep you company along the way.

That our membership has grown by 50% (from 200 to 300) in the past year is certainly a cause for celebration, but it's not all gravy. For instance, you'll note that we had to really squeeze to get all the members' names on that small piece of paper. If we had gone to larger type on a bigger piece of paper, our postage would have run to 52 cents instead of the usual 29 cents, thus adding \$72.91 to our postage bill for this mailing.

You'll notice that the charter members are marked with an asterisk. This rather exclusive group (15 of the original 25) qualified by responding to my June '89 QST "Stray" article and becoming members during that calendar year. Their longtime loyalty is much appreciated.

BMHA Plans SPECIAL EVENT

Several members have said that BMHA should have its own Special Event. In addition to encouraging bicycle-to-bicycle and shack-to-bicycle QSO's, a BMHA Special Event would enhance the club's image and perhaps give it world-wide publicity. The major ham magazines regularly devote a page to a listing of Special Events. (A typical special event would be: "The Tri-city ARA on Aug 14, on the lower portion of the 40, 20, and 15 bands, will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of..." Or, "On Thanksgiving Day the Cape Cod ARA will be on the air from Plymouth Rock to celebrate the landing of the Pilgrims.")

Jim Kortge, NU8N, is gathering ideas for a BMHA Special Event. Obviously, it will involve bicycling and hamming, but it needs refinement and definition. Put some thought to it and send your ideas to: Jim Kortge, NU8N, POB 108, Ponton MI 48438. (313) 629-0378

Latest News from Africa Trek

We just received the quarterly bulletin from AfricaTrek, the 5-man, 10,000-mile expedition cycling the length of Africa. (For more info see the January '93 issue.) The leader, BMHA'er Dan Buettner, writes: "The AfricaTrek team has now traveled 6,545 miles in 137 days. In crossing 8 countries in eastern Africa, we've traversed the world's largest desert, endured giardia, diarrhea, and three bouts with malaria."



Dan Buettner (rt.) leads AfricaTrek thru village.

We've been robbed eight times, pedaled past two dead bodies, eaten everything from centipedes to roast monkey and picked up enough worms and intestinal parasites to make for interesting science experiments.

We picked up an extra team member in the Central African Republic — a three-pound monkey named Elmer. I found him in a market where his mother lay sizzling on a flaming grill. Elmer would have been next if I hadn't bought him: \$2.89 — the going price for monkey meat. Elmer rode on my bike, chattering and singing. We drew a crowd everywhere we stopped; the funny-looking monkey and the funnier-looking American with the tight bicycling shorts.

"I had to leave Elmer at the border. I couldn't just let him go — separated from his mother, Elmer would never survive in the wild on his own. So through a Peace Corps worker I found an African family to take him. They promised not to eat him."

—Hartley Alley, NAOA, Editor

TRAVEL & ADVENTURE

Five Short Months On The Long Long Road

Last year, I rode 7,902 miles from Washington to Maine to Florida to visit my mother. I left Kingston, Washington, on June 1st, and had my first flat (of ten total) just over the Idaho border. I didn't have a spare tire, so I patched the hole by folding up a dollar bill and placing it inside the casing. At the bike shop 40 miles later I said, quite grandly, "your tip is inside the tire."

Riding to Eureka, Montana, a few days later, the daytime temperature fell into the 40s; the rain sure didn't help. I was reduced to stopping every five miles or so to shove my numb hands in my pockets. First thing I did in Eureka was to buy a pair of warm woolen gloves.

On the road from Libby to Eureka, I met Beth and Bill Stroeter, 49-year-old twins from New England who were riding cross country, and whom I would meet several times again on my journey. We camped together in Glacier Park — words and pictures can't do justice to its beauty. If you can, go see it — preferably from a bicycle. From Logan Pass (4,000 ft.) I was able to get into repeaters as far away as Minneapolis — about 140 miles away.

In Nastro, MT, I asked a man on the street "excuse me, is there a laundromat in town?" "No, but if you go over to my house — down that street, next to the church — go on in, tell my wife I sent you, and wash your clothes there." "But there are eight of us." "No problem."

Thus we met Tom Anderson, the local Lutheran minister, who opened his home and church to us weary sojourners. We raided the local store and cooked a big pasta dinner for him, his wife, and daughter. Most of the guys I was riding with at that time were Jewish, so, it being a Friday night, we had a combination Shabbat blessing and Grace with the meal. It must have worked, because we had tumultuous tailwinds the next day! After dinner we slept in the fellowship hall of the church. We continued on our merry way into North Dakota, dodging rain clouds for about 400 miles. Upon reaching Minot, I learned of the untimely death of a close friend — Bill, N6GDN. I took the train home and drove to Bill's home in CA.

I resumed the trip ten days later, striking out to the southeast. Near Stevens Point, WI, three adjacent spokes were pulling through my specially-built 48-spoke, cross-4 rear rim. In one hour the problem got so bad that I had to drop the rear brakes because the rim was hitting them. I sweated it out all the way to Appleton, WI — a long 60 miles. I telephoned Dave, N6PQG, in WA. He retrieved my old tandem rim and had it sent to the bike shop in Appleton, and I was finally on my way again.

In Manitowish, WI, I took a ferry across Lake Michigan. SS Badger, a beautiful old ship, coal-fueled, two steam piston engines, etc. Spent the whole 4-hour trip in the engine room — in real life I'm in the Merchant Marine. In Indiana, my seat problem reared its ugly head (literally) — loose dogs. Squirting them and yelling wasn't doing any good. If I had to stop for every one I would've reached Bar Harbor, Maine around December. I found the solution! A small spray can of HALT — it contains cayenne pepper and is the friend of mailmen countrywide.

Did my longest day — 138 miles — between St. Joseph and Wabash, IN. In Monroeville, near the Ohio border, the town

park commission has set up a shelter especially for cyclists, with room for 100 cyclists and their bikes. Real Hoosier hospitality! Half an hour later who showed up but Beth and Bill, the twins I'd last seen in Montana!

In Ohio I met and rode with a crazy Canadian from Toronto named Ziggy. He was carrying a spare part for everything on his bike. His load was up over 150 pounds — no wonder he was breaking spokes on a 48-spoke wheel, and had already cracked both seat stays! We rode to Cleveland, where I took a couple of days off; went over to Amateur Electronic Supply in Wickliffe, OH, and bought myself a MFJ-9020 20-meter QRP CW radio. (Look for Tim's *PRODUCT REVIEW* in the next issue. —Ed.) Set up a dipole and the radio the next day in a city park and promptly worked VE1VAS in Nova Scotia.

Gave my VHF handheld a workout in Corry, PA — talked to some locals who came down and eyeballed me the next day. (Unbeknownst to me, Norma, W3CQ, had put me in her amateur radio column in the Erie, PA, Sunday paper.) On into New York. Rode through Watkins Glen and the Finger Lakes area, seeing old friends near Rochester. While waiting in a pizza parlor in Schenectady, who rode by but Beth and Bill!

I went East through historic Ticonderoga and into Vermont. While camped one night I struck up a conversation with a man and his wife. While discussing my trip, she remarked, "that sounds exactly like the trip Beth and Bill are doing." "Do you mean Beth Stroeter?" I asked. "Yes! She's my cousin!" she said. Small world, eh?

Reached Bar Harbor, Maine on August 30. Did a side trip to Machias, ME, before heading South. Stopped at ARRL headquarters in Newington, CT, on September 10th and operated W1AW. My mag shot is on page 98 of last November's QST.



Here I am at ARRL Headquarters in Newington.

Continuing South, people were very friendly and interested in what I was doing. Very nice, open, generous people throughout the Deep South, between Richmond and Jacksonville.

I entered Florida on Oct. 26, and finally made it to my mother's house in Bradenton on Nov. 3 (just in time to vote) after 7902 miles, 10 flats, 7 rear and 3 front tires, 3 rear rims, one broken bracket, and 2 chains and freewheels sacrificed to the deities of long-distance touring. I had spent five short months on the long long road. Let's do it again!

—Tim Palange, KD4WZ
22985 Jefferson Pt Rd NE
Kingston, WA 98346

LETTERS

10-meter Mobile

Dear BMHA,

I read about your organization in the September issue of CQ. I was happy to see that there were other hams interested in HF Bicycling. I have been a ham for 10 years and I had not heard about your organization till now. I have been HF mobile on my bike for a couple of years and enjoy it a great deal.

I work a lot with youth, and they really think it is pretty neat to operate from a bicycle. Matter of fact, during Field Day in June, band conditions were terrible on 10 meters, yet I was able to work Brazil from my bike. Getting a little DX was great.

I am using a HTX-100 10 meter rig from Radio Shack, and a 7 amp, lead-acid sealed battery with a Hygain 10 meter resonator. I use the short stick from Hygain to connect to the 10 meter resonator, because the other stick was just too long. I have used a Ham-10 antenna on the bike, but I find the whip gets caught in trees as I travel.

I would like to use my 430S on my bike, but I do not want to have a huge battery on the back. With 10 meters off and on, I would love to go 20 meters SSB, so I can show kids how I operate. I wish they would make a dedicated 20 meter SSB radio with about 20 watts of power.

My bicycle is a Giant Iguana, bright red that really stands out. I am a big guy, so I need to use a mountain bike.

I would be interested in what kind of set-ups other hams use on their bikes, and I am sending a check for \$10 so I can receive your newsletter.

73,

—Joel Colman, N8ED1
49 Park Avenue
Harrison, New York

20 Years of Bicycling Hamdom

Dear Hartley,

I have been involved in both bicycling and ham radio since the early seventies and am always finding ways to combine these activities. There are several 2m repeaters in my area with phone autopatches which gives one an extra-secure feeling when cycling far from houses and pay-phones. (This really impressed people in the pre-cellular-phone era.)

Recently a number of local amateur organizations and bicycle tour organizers have gotten together to provide communications for many of our local tours. This gives me the opportunity to act as a mobile link as well as sort of a "cross-cultural" link between the cyclists and hams.

—Jim Gumbert, NC8Y
419 S. Third St.
Tipp City, Ohio 45371

Tandem Fun

Hello Hartley:

Enclosed is a check for membership for my XYL and me. I find your newsletters very enjoyable so would like all available back issues for my library.

I will be checking with the others in our group, a tandem club, to see what they thought of the newsletters. I didn't tell them I was sending for the BMHA info. We have all used 2 meters to keep in touch on our tandem rallies and it also

came in very handy for last year's "COW" rally when a tornado alert interrupted our fun. (COW is a Wisconsin tandem club called Couples On Wheels.)

We will be on the lookout for others to pass your info on to.

73 for now-

—Al Hammond, KDHW
Box 317,
Atkins, IA 52206

Bike Racer Adds Radio

Hartley,

Thanks for the newsletter and the nice comments. Please count me in. I'm a USCF bicycle racer and certified official who's worked a hundred bike races, but is now to hamming while mobile (only VHF and UHF now). I've got a lot to learn.

Thanks,

—Mark Walsh, KC6RKZ
4529 Taylor Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

J-Pole To The Rescue

Dear Sirs,

I've been bicycle mobile for about a year now on 2m with a 1-watt HT and speaker/mike in my handlebar bag and a full sized J-pole antenna mounted on a grounded 8 ft 'CB' whip bracketed at the rear hub of my bike. The J-pole makes it all possible -- here the terrain often makes the repeaters unobtainable with a 'duck'. My average ride is anything between five and thirty miles.

I've been toying with ideas for HF bicycle mobile and would like to compare ideas and hear about some of these already operational stations... my philosophy is to 'keep it light' with both weight and power. CW is choice, and I am a QRP homebrewer.

Enclosed is my SASE. Please send a membership application: I most definitely belong with this fine group of gentlemen. Keep your water bottle full and your spokes straight!

P.S. Saw you in CQ Magazine -- will try to make the 20 meter net.

73,

—Harry Bump, KM3D
P.O. Box 392
Richland, PA 17087



Back Issues Still Available

You may purchase any of the twelve back issues of the BMHA Newsletter for \$2 each, postpaid. For info on the contents of the various issues send a business-size SASE to: BMHA, POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306, and ask for the Index. This service available to members only.

HOW TO....

Creative HT Mounting

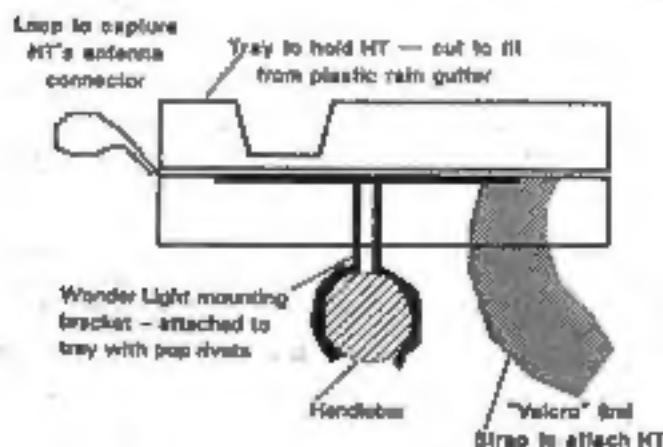
I've been a bicycle-mobile "happy camper" for about two years now (see my article "I Like Mine Best" in the Jan-Mar 1992 issue of the BMHA newsletter). This has been my whole ham career, so I am definitely not complaining.

Then disaster struck. I joined a 440 MHz repeater club. My bicycle-mobile HT was wonderful on 2 meters (a top-mounted display fit the handlebar bag nicely), but didn't work at all on 70 cm (because the Kenwood TH-26AT was 2-meter only, of course!).

I have two dual-band HTs (A Kenwood TH-75A and a Kenwood TH-77A), but both had front-mounted displays — which I couldn't see while riding. It was obviously time for a new mounting solution.

When I started seriously commuting by bicycle, I upgraded my headlight to something "really powerful" (I already had an unbelievably bright homebrewed tail-light — this headlight was also homebrewed, large, and "bright"). This left my old "Wonder Light" unused, and I started to lust after it's handlebar mounting scheme. In case you've never seen one, a "Wonder Light" is a flat flashlight which slides into a holder which, in turn, clamps onto a bicycle handlebar.

My result is outlined in the figure below. Please study it a while, and I'll talk you through the fine points afterwards:

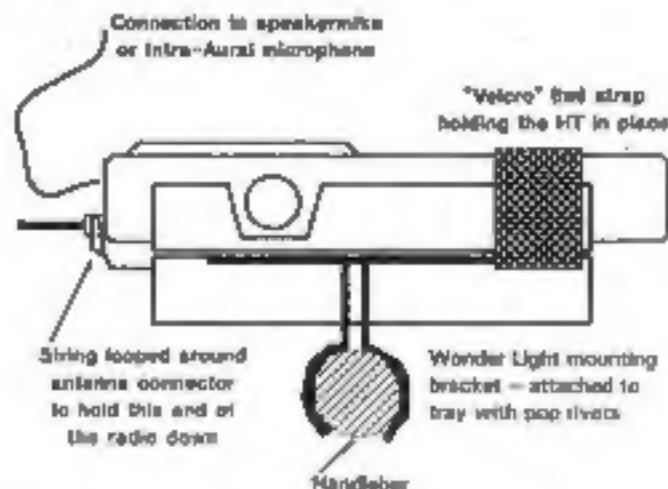


HT MOUNTING SCHEME:

- 1) Cut the "ears" off of the Wonder Light bracket. What you want is a flat platform which will attach to your bicycle's handlebars.
- 2) Cut two lengths of "U-channel". I used plastic rain-gutter pipe, which fit my HT (A Kenwood TH-77A) perfectly.
- 3) Trim the top "U-channel" appropriately. Leave open areas for the PTT switch, any battery connections you desire, etc.
- 4) Mount the bottom "U-channel" (used for reinforcing only), top "U-channel", and the remains of the Wonder Light bracket together with "Pop Rivets" or another mounting scheme (screws would work nicely, also).

- 5) To the bottom "U-channel", attach a short loop of twine or medium-strength string. This will loop around your HT's antenna connector and secure the top of the HT in place.
- 6) Thread a length of strap (I used "Velcro" strap, although anything which can be secured would work) between the top and bottom sections of "U-channel" near the back end of the assembly.
- 7) Put some form of padding into the bottom of this assembly. I used closed-cell weatherproofing for electric outlets, but thicker foam (e.g., wet suit foam) offers even more protection to the HT from vibration and bumps.
- 8) Use the Wonder Light's mounting screw to attach this assembly to the handlebars.
- 9) Strap your HT into this concoction, and go for a ride. You're all done!

The overall installation looks like this:



This mounting has worked well for me as I commute back and forth to work. I would be very interested in learning of any comments or improvements that any of you bicycle-mobile hams have to suggest. My packet address is AA6WK@NOCARY.NOCAL.CA.USA.NA.

—Skip LaFerra, AA6WK
1614 Peacock Ave.
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

An Apology to Eddy Powell, N6BPH

In the last issue's OUR PEOPLE, we listed and celebrated our BMHA members who have cycled 300 miles in a day. In the meantime, we inadvertently left off the name of the earliest member of our 300 group: Eddy Powell, N6BPH of Occomo, CA. Way back in the January '91 issue we ran Eddy's story, titled "No Excess Baggage", in which he told us about his second trans-america bike trip and how his ham rig moved the day. Here's how we introduced that article: "Eddy Powell, N6BPH, was the pioneer 'N6 Bicycle Pedaling Ham' for good reason: he's ridden across the US twice (in 1980 and again in '90), and his personal best for 24 hours is 300 miles". Eddy, please accept our apologies — and keep good notes when you do it again in 2000, because we'll want you to do a piece on the trip for the BMHA Newsletter! —Ed.

BMHA NET....ON 20

Attention, Shack-bound Bikies

The 20-meter BMHA Net is still alive. I have not been able to call the net very much this summer due to a heavy work and local club schedule, but now as the weather gets cooler and the days get shorter, look for me. I want to thank those who have covered for me on the net. Your efforts are much appreciated.

Jim Korte, NUSN, of Ponton, Michigan has signed on as the Stand-by Net Control. If for some reason I can't take the net, Jim will jump in. One of the most faithful check-ins since the '91 start of the BMHA net, Jim is 50, an engineer, has been a ham for 37 years, and has ridden 100 miles in a day — just a hint of his long list of hamming and cycling accomplishments. Welcome aboard, Jim.

The net meets on the first and third Sundays of each month. The frequency is 14.253 (plus or minus the QRM), at 0000 UTC on Sunday evenings. That's actually Monday UTC, but it's Sunday evening here in the USA. Look for me a few minutes before net time and feel free to call me if you find a nice clear frequency near 14.253. Looking forward to a bunch of check-ins during the coming fall and winter months.

—Mike Nickolaus, NPON, BMHA Net Control
316 E. 32nd St.
S. Sioux City, NE 68776

NEW MEMBERS

We're pleased to add these names to our Membership List:

Bob Abrams, WA3LQK, 256 Marion Rd., Marion Station PA 19066
Steve Barton, KU9J, 36 W 308 Blair, Winfield IL 60190
Ron Blake, NORTX, 3 Oxford Rd., Norwood MA 02062
James R. Brown, KBGA, 9203 Congdon Blvd., Duluth MN 55804
Harry Bump, KMJD, POB 392, Richmond VA 17087
David Eggleston, KNA5, 1605 W Tennessee, Midland TX 79701
Jack Harms, N8EYP, 1242 Syer Dr., New Canaan OH 45344
Carm Hartford, N5GA, 1959 Bridgeport Av., Cleveland CA 91711
Eric Hovey, KA6BJT, 6776 Los Verdes Dr #2, Rancho PV, CA 90274
Jim Hudson, NEDD, 524 Carley Av., Sharon PA 16146

John Kelleher, K1GQP, POC 679, Accomac VA 22301
Rod Krontz, N3QKK, 620 NW 139, Edmond OK 73013
Dobbin Lindhart, N0WEL, 2135 Thomas Ct., Ft Collins CO 80521
Bob Lindhart, N0WEL
Charles Loggins, W4UJ, 1034 E. 10th St., Cheyenne WY 82001
Glen R. Mills, N8BEG, POB 3393, Mission Viejo CA 92690
Daniel Murray, VE7TXA, 24 Antiochville Sq., Brantford, ON L6Z1N4
Douglas Taber, N6UA, 56 Nighthawk Dr., Boulder CO 80302
Roger L. Wick, W8ZEX, 9745 South 3rd, Woodstock OH 43084

With traditional ham friendliness, make contact with these new members, welcome them to BMHA, and help them with any problems they might have.

BMHA NEWSLETTER

EDITOR: Hartley Alley, NAOA
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Skip LaFetra, AA6WK

BOARD OF ADVISORS:
Russell Dwanthuis, KB8U Les Koppl, KD0RC
Mike Nickolaus, NPON Bob Pulhuj, KE2ZJ
Chairman and Founder: Hartley Alley, NAOA

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We welcome articles, suggestions, letters, announcements, photos, artwork — anything pertaining to bicycling while operating an amateur radio, or vice versa.

Submitted material will be edited for clarity and, if necessary, shortened to fit space constraints. Material should be submitted before Mar 1, June 1, Sept 1, or Dec 1 for inclusion in the ensuing issue.

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ABOUT BMHA

For the information of our first-time readers.

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America got its start when a "Stacy" in the June '89 QST magazine asked to "get in touch with hams who operate their radios while bicycle-mobile, or while in any other human-powered conveyance", signed by Hartley Alley, NAOA. Twenty-five hams responded, filled out questionnaires, and received a summary of the collected data.

In April of '90 we had our first BMHA Forum at the Dayton HamVention. We played in a packed house, overflowed the room, and added 54 names to our mailing list. Our three subsequent forums have drawn increasingly larger audiences, and now BMHA is established as a "regular" at this world-renowned event.

This is the thirteenth issue of our quarterly newsletter, which has become the clearing house for the exchange of info and ideas for the hams who go on the air from their bicycles. Since the last issue of this newsletter we have added 19 new members. The total membership now stands at 314, with members in 41 states, and four countries.

BMHA membership puts you in touch with a friendly and helpful group of bike-riding hams. You'll make contacts through our membership directory, packet address list, bi-weekly net on 20 meters, annual meeting and Forum at the Dayton HamVention, and of course through the BMHA Newsletter, which has articles on bike trips, antennas, other gear, operating tips, etc. Membership application blank on the next to last page.

LOSING WEIGHT

Let's Yackerize!

Mike Glitschel, KC6QFO, has given permission to reprint this article, which first appeared in the newsletter of the Las Cumbre CA Amateur Radio Club.

I was told by the military to lose 28 pounds. The only fun way was to do this was to "yackerize" on my bicycle mobile. Not only did I tone the old stomach muscles, I toned up the old mouth muscles as well! With Skip LaFetra, AA6WK's help and support, I have been working bicycle mobile for a while now, attempting to make bicycle radio communications as user-friendly as possible.

Currently I am using an Icom IC-24AT dual-band HT radio mounted on the handlebars, in a custom-built leather holding case. This makes it easy to control the radio with a touch of a finger.

My radio is powered by a 7.5 amp-hour gel-cell battery mounted out of the way under the front of the mountain bike's seat assembly. I found the standard 12 volt HT battery to be inadequate and having too short a life. I feel that the battery should have at least a 2.5 amp-hour for real "rag chewing" time periods! Power is of great importance, in that you have a very small ground plane area and you truly need a full 5 watts of communicating power -- especially in or around any hill or mountain terrain. *[La Fetra, AA6WK: my own 1/2-wave antenna works fine at 2 watts, and does not require a ground plane, but it is more difficult to install than his solution.]*

I have additional capabilities due to the recent purchase of an Icom IC-2410-H cross-band remote repeater radio for my truck. I can now work around any mountain range on low power from my bicycle HT and use my high power truck mobile radio for more "mega rag chewing" time.

My antenna configuration consists of a book rack type of rear carrier located over the rear tire. I installed a 6x6 inch galvanized steel plate just behind the book rack spring assembly. On it I have mounted a very high gain Diamond Dual Band mag-mount antenna. The book rack itself can still be used to hold an HF radio someday. NOTE: The galvanized mounting plate is mounted far enough off that I still have plenty of room to swing my leg over the bike seat without knocking over the antenna.

In the past, I was using the HT's hand mike as my receiving speaker and found out very quickly that the audio level was being drowned out by loud traffic noise. To solve that problem, I mounted a 4x4 inch highly efficient Midland mobile speaker in front of my handlebars. It's in a nice out of the way place and yet I now can hear all of the audio that comes my way.

The only drawback to "yackerizing" is what to do with the microphone. If I had to take my hand off of the handlebars too frequently to push the PTT switch, I could wind up taking a nasty AA6WK mishap! *[LaFetra: oh, my gosh -- he remembers the bicycle crash where I broke my right collarbone -- and I wasn't even operating the radio at the time!]*

I found that the Icom IC-HS-51 HANDS-FREE headset was the way to go! This headset has the TOT, PTT, and VOX features, and really makes "yackerizing" more enjoyable. I

have been using the TOT (talk-on talk-off) option. The PTT controller is mounted just left of the right handlebar brake lever for easy control. I utilize my index finger and hit the switch once to key the radio and once again to unkey the transmitter -- again keeping my hands firmly on the handlebars for better and safer bike control. So far the IC-HS-51 headset is working just fine. I have been receiving good clear signal reports with very little traffic and wind noise.

Yackerizing has been a total enjoyment and a great way to keep in shape and lose weight at the same time -- and to keep those mouth muscles limber, too! If you would like to see my bike or have any questions please contact me or any of the bicycle yackerizers. It truly is becoming a real amateur radio "RAD FAD"!

—Mike Glitschel, KC6QFO
230 Branbury Dr.
Campbell, CA 95008

UPCOMING EVENTS

Plans Underway for Dayton '94

It's time to start planning for the 1994 Dayton HamVention. As most of you know, it takes place on the last weekend in April. Bob Pulhuj, KE8ZJ, and I have been named co-chairmen of BMHA's Forum for next year's event.

We'd like very much to hear your program ideas, suggestions for possible improvements, etc. Because our four previous forums have been highly successful, naturally we'd like to retain the same basic format, but we welcome your ideas and comments.

Was the secret 2-meter frequency a good one? How did the Lunch Bunch work out? Should we continue with the Saturday afternoon bike ride? Let us know. Our packet address: NFUN @ NPON.NE and KE8ZJ @ W3HHF.OH.

—Mike Nickolaus, NFDH
316 East 32nd St.
S. Sioux City, NE 65776

—Bob Pulhuj, KE8ZJ
POB 11429
Toledo, OH 43611

BMHA to Hold Forum at the Great Western Bicycle Rally

As you readers were told in the last issue, BMHA has been invited to have a "Western States Get-together" next Memorial Day weekend as a part of the Great Western Bicycle Rally.

The GWBR draws 2,000 cyclists to the Paso Robles, CA, area for a program that includes 90 different bike rides, bike clinics, a mass cookout, and a special wine and cheese tasting party -- all for the \$12 registration fee.

Preliminary plans call for BMHA to host a forum (open to the public) Saturday or Sunday afternoon. If you have suggestions for topics to be covered or if you would like to present a topic on the program, please contact the forum chairmen: Ken Wahrenbrock, KF6NC, 9609 Cheddar St., Downey, CA 90242. For more details, see the previous issue, and watch future issues for specific details as plans are finalized.

CLUBS & EVENTS

RAGBRAI-93, The Best Ever

RAGBRAI, Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, was another success for 1993. This year's ride started in Sioux City, Iowa and ended in Dubuque for a total of 529 miles, and as usual, 10,000 cyclists took part in this week-long event. Since I live just across the river, in South Sioux City, Nebraska, we made my house and backyard the home base for the Ham Group the day before the ride started. During the day of July 24th, the riders in our group started to arrive. By evening there were 25 bike-hams and several support people pitching tents in our back yard.

Not content with just pedaling across the one state of Iowa, some of our group set the goal of cycling in six states in the seven days. We would do this, of course, by making side tours during the event. So some of us made a short 25-mile loop Saturday evening up into South Dakota. The evening before the ride is a time to get lots of rest before starting out for the week's ride. Unfortunately, the mosquito decided to munch on most of us that night. What a feast they had. Also the neighbors across the way had just purchased a brand new trampoline that day and the kids had a big party until after midnight. There were some in our group that considered lynching.

The next morning we started off bright and early. The

morning was warm and the wind to our side and back most of the way the first day. A great day and NO rain, a surprise to many of the out-of-staters, who thought that Iowa was all under water anyway.

For the next week we wandered across Iowa enjoying the scenery, great food, good weather (dry), and friendly people at every stop. A highlight of the week for us bike-hams was at West Bend. One of group had relatives nearby and as we passed through town they stopped us, put our bikes in a locked garage, and chauffeured us to a farm outside of town where we were royally fed both breakfast and lunch all in one sitting. We were all stuffed by the time we got our bikes back and were on the road again.

We hams had our own SAG vehicle. Equipped with a 30-foot portable push-up 2-meter antenna and a 50-watt rig, the SAG would sit up halfway through the day's ride. This was set up so that we could talk our way to the SAG's location using 2-meters on the bikes. It was always nice to have a nice cold one halfway thru the day's ride.

We stayed as a group each night. On several nights we had arrangements to stay at a house in the town, where as private guests we had access to great shower and restroom facilities. On the nights that we tented in the main campground, we had to bleed in with "the masses" and fend for ourselves for the shower and restroom facilities. Food was never a problem, as we usually ate at one of the local churches or a civic organization. Meals on RAGBRAI are

always excellent and reasonable in price. All you want for under \$5.

Since this was billed as a six-state ride, on Thursday many of us made a short side trip up to Minnesota. It was a beautiful trip and only added about 25 miles to the day. A few of the group made friends in a Minnesota town, cornered the locals out of some great T-shirts, and even had a story done about them in the local newspaper.

Finally, the last day had to come. It's always great to come down the long hill, see the Mississippi and, as tradition dictates, dip the front wheel. Again a few crossed the river and went into Illinois and Wisconsin to complete the 6 states in 7 days. We then had to load up the vans, trailers and motor homes. It's always hard to say good bye to your riding friends, but we all agreed that we would most likely be back again next year.

I have done this trip eight times now and it becomes more enjoyable each year. I hope to complete at least ten RAGBRAI's before I retire from the event.

It's hard to mention all the people who contribute to making this Ham RAGBRAI a successful event but I must mention one person who makes it go each year and deserves a lot of thanks. Chris Charron, WB0RSW, RAGBRAI's Ham Radio Coordinator, does more leg work, organizing and planning without getting any thanks, money or credit. My helmet's off to him for another great RAGBRAI.

—Mike Nickolaus, NF0N

316 East 32nd St.

South Sioux City, NE 68776

Membership Application

MEMBER'S COPY (to be filled out by applicant)
BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA
Box 4009, Boulder, CO 80306

Individual \$10 _____ new member? _____ renewal? _____
(US or Canada)

Family \$15 _____ Foreign \$15 _____ Donation \$ _____
(limit: two persons)

Make check payable to BMHA, in US dollars or international money order.

Name _____ Call _____

Address _____ License Class _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Age _____ Most miles bicycled in one day _____

BMHA's Official Logo

The next time you need to order new QSL cards, don't forget to include the BMHA logo in your design. Here's the official logo, as designed by Russ Dwarshuis, KB8U.



LETTERS

Bike-to-Bike Communication

Dear Hartley,

Congratulations on the newsletter! My wife Laura, N8NFE, and I enjoy it very much.

As we read about various riders' setups, we're always surprised that no one describes anything quite like ours. We use HTs primarily to talk to each other, either through the repeater during our daily work commutes or to each other during longer rides. For bike-to-bike communication, our ideal would be to make the radio transparent — we want to be able to carry on a conversation as if we were sitting quietly next to each other, even over wind noises and a bit of road separation. Safety being a primary consideration, we decided that being tethered in any way to the bicycle, such as through an antenna cable, is unsafe, as are objects sticking up in the rider's way, such as handlebar-mounted microphones.

We settled on headset microphones with an acoustically transparent single ear piece on the right and HTs clipped to the rider's belt. Antenna is either helmet-clipped (as in Laura's photo, at right) or on the rig. The latter is more than adequate for bike-to-bike chatter. We run full-duplex VOX when riding together and regular PTT for the repeater, the VOX/PTT box being on the rider's belt next to the HT.

The VOX works great. We got something of a tongue-lashing for using VOX, when we discussed it with other BMHA-ers at the Dayton Forum this year, but we really have had no problems and consider it much safer than having to reach for a PTT switch. The BMHA-ers' concern was that we would accidentally transmit obscene words shouted at dogs and passers-by, thereby "breaking many laws and endangering all of ham radio." We were a little amused by this — we don't swear at dogs since they usually miss the subtle implications of the words, and anyway, we have never noticed FCC monitoring vans trailing within listening distance of our 50 mW HTs. Laura and I talk a lot (to each other) and the full-duplex VOX has saved lots of sore throats. And we no longer need to shout over wind noise!

I do wish that the manufacturers would improve their microphone headsets. The biggest problem is that they don't include a sidetone. Alexander Bell recognized even before shipping a commercial telephone that users need to hear their own voices through the instrument, and aircraft headsets all include it. Without a sidetone, the VOX user can't tell when he's transmitting and he can't correctly modulate his voice for the microphone.



We're using Kenwood TH77A equipment, with matching headsets. Occasionally we use off-brand in-the-ear microphones which work quite well for the repeaters, but are unusable for full-duplex or VOX. Antennas are Diamond or supplied ducks. Cable is the commercially-made Ducky-Clip.

Great fun, all. Ham radio has got to be the greatest deal going for a close couple. It's amazing how much we can talk!

—David Kardon, MD, AD8T
2475 Kingston Rd.
Cleveland, OH 44118

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